

## HEINZ DIETRICH LUBRECHT (1908-1997), BOTANICAL BOOKSELLER AND FRIEND

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Heinz (Harry) Dietrich Lubrecht, age 88, well known botanical and natural history bookseller, antiquarian book expert, appraiser, and former executive of the publishing company, Stechert-Hafner, died 12 November 1997, at the Columbia Presbyterian Hospital, New York City, after suffering a stroke. Harry, as he was affectionately known by friends, colleagues, and family, devoted nearly 70 years to the scholarly book trade, particularly in botany and natural history. In 1974 he established Lubrecht & Cramer, Booksellers and Publishers, currently located in Port Jervis, NY. His high standards of business, steadfast honesty, and breadth of knowledge of botanical literature earned him national and international respect as a bookman. With the passing of Harry Lubrecht the botanical and bookselling community has lost a faithful friend and serious scholar.

Born 2 December 1908, in Reutlinger, Germany, Harry was the son of Adolph August Karl Friederich Wilhelm and Sophie Amalie (Grueninger) Lubrecht. His father, an architect, was the son of Lutheran Pastor Adolph Lubrecht and Emma Karoline Kuebel. His mother, well-educated and adept in three foreign languages, was the daughter of Johann Matthaus Grueninger, Professor of Mathematics in the Reutlinger Hochschule, and Sophie Kaemerer. When Harry was five, his parents separated. Subsequently, Harry, his mother, and two sisters moved to Stuttgart to live in an aunt's apartment home. He attended Friedrich Eugens Oberrealschule and completed Hochschule in Stuttgart. Throughout his school years Harry was an avid reader. In order to ensure enrollment at his school, Harry secured an annual scholarship by placing in the top five of his class.

Upon graduation at age 17, Harry became an apprentice in Brueninger's department store as part of his continued schooling. His flare for business was well recognized by the store's management and in three years he earned the salary of a regular employee. Refusing to join the Nazi party, he was compelled to leave Germany. Harry emigrated to the United States where his Uncle Christian Grueninger, the mayor of Valhalla, NY, would sponsor him. Arriving in America on 15 May 1928, he soon found a job as a grave

digger at the local cemetery in Mt. Kensico, NY. When this seasonal work concluded that fall, Harry looked for employment in New York City. In October 1928, G.E. Stechert & Co.,<sup>1</sup> well-known international book firm, hired him at a weekly salary of \$14.00. The stage was thus set for a distinguished, life-long career in the book world, a profession practiced by ancestors on two sides of his family. Some of the Kuebels were medieval scribes, the book "publishers" of their time. In the early nineteenth century two Lubrecht brothers, Heinrich and August Adolph, separately developed careers as booksellers in Heilbronn and Blaubeuren, Germany. In the mid-nineteenth century August's son, Karl Theobold, emigrated from Blaubeuren to Brooklyn, NY. Here he Anglicized his name to Charles T. and founded with his cousin the publishing company Haasis and Lubrecht.

At Stechert Harry advanced from his initial position as billing clerk to assistant manager of the Antiquarian Department (April 1936). He was a natural for this job as he was familiar with German, French, Latin, and Greek. His facility for languages assisted him in compiling book catalogs and understanding the contents of many scientific books, especially those in German, acquired by the company. Since his immediate boss lacked significant experience in the antiquarian book market, Harry enjoyed the freedom and breadth to develop the antiquarian department about which topic he read widely. Under his supervision the process of searching for and supplying out-of-print books was significantly accelerated (Anonymous 1952). Among Harry's promotions were to: Chief of Reference and Customer Service, G.E. Stechert & Co. (spring 1945); Division Chief, Antiquarian and Out-of-Print Department, Stechert-Hafner, Inc. (fall 1951); Vice-President and Editor, Hafner Publishing Co. (January 1955); and Vice President, Macmillan Publishing Co.-Hafner Publishing Division (1969).

After conducting a four-year study on subject publishing, Harry concluded that few firms published books on botany. Through Harry's efforts a new subsidiary called Stechert-Hafner Service Agency was established in 1960. Botanists and natural historians are fortunate to have had Harry's

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<sup>1</sup>A brief chronology of this book firm provides an historical perspective. Stechert & Wolff, founded on 1 September 1872, was renamed Gustav E. Stechert (1876), G.E. Stechert (1897), and G.E. Stechert & Co. (1904). On 1 October 1946, the G.E. Stechert partnership was dissolved and Stechert-Hafner, Inc. (SH) was created with its publishing and reprinting activities transferred to the newly established Hafner Publishing Co. In 1960 Stechert-Hafner Service Agency was established as a subsidiary of SH. Crowell Collier Macmillan, Inc. (now Macmillan, Inc.) acquired SH and its subsidiaries (1969). Beginning January 1974, the corporate name, Stechert Macmillan, Inc., became effective. By 1980 Macmillan, Inc. was divided into three parts of which Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. contained the division now called Hafner Press.



Harry Lubrecht making a presentation at the Botanical Society of America Meeting, Historical Section, held at The Ohio State University, Columbus, 11 August 1987. Photo Courtesy Ronald L. Stuckey.

wisdom in developing this subsidiary. This new division served scholarly, scientific and botanical societies by selling their publications and distributing scientific and botanical books for European publishers on a large scale. The Agency distributed publications for the New York Botanical Garden, Missouri Botanical Garden, Texas Research Foundation, and the Hunt Botanical Library (Anonymous 1972). During the 1960s and 1970s Harry also focussed attention on reprinting book classics in botany within the Hafner Publishing Co. Among the reprint series issued were the *Classica Botanica Americana* (CBA) titles by such eighteenth and nineteenth century luminaries as Humphry Marshall, John Torrey & Asa Gray, C. S. Rafinesque, Stephen Elliott, Thomas Nuttall, and William Darlington. Joseph Ewan, historian of botany, proposed this series and wrote a bibliographical commentary for each of the reprinted books (Ewan 1967). Ironically, these facsimile reprints, as well as many others produced by Hafner, have become as rare as the originals themselves. The rarity of these volumes was due in part

to their limited printing, high demand by scholars, and the destruction of remaining stock when Crowell Collier Macmillan, Inc. purchased Stechert-Hafner and its subsidiaries in May 1969.

After this corporate change Harry chose to direct the Publishing Division. He could not, however, abandon his interest in and passion for rare and out-of-print books. Using a substantial part of his lunch hour, he would work in the Antiquarian Department at noon time. Through his voluntary work, a veritable labor of love, Harry raised impressive revenues for the firm.

While at Stechert, Harry especially enjoyed appraising private collections for purchase. He was instrumental in acquiring an outstanding mathematics library in 1937, besides many other collections. Representing his company, Harry participated in the First Antiquarian Book Fair in the United States, sponsored by the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of America and held in New York City (4–9 April 1960). Confident that the fair would be successful, he prepared an attractive catalog (#277) of rare books, the first ever issued from the Stechert-Hafner Antiquarian Department (Anonymous 1960). One of his career highlights was the discovery of 11 first editions of the works of Linnaeus in a Paris bookshop. These books had an additional historical value since they were annotated by the French botanist and explorer Michel Adanson (1727–1806), noted for his work on the natural classification of plants (Lubrecht 1986).

Harry compiled numerous book catalogs covering general topics, Greek and Latin authors, and natural history. Although no longer in print, his catalog (#353), "Early American Botanical Works with a Miscellany of Other Botanical Rarities" (Lubrecht 1967), provides an historical survey of early classics in North American botany. This booklet, the result of five years of searching (Anonymous 1967), contains an introduction (pp. 3–5) by Harry, an annotated list of 217 botanical titles offered for sale, and a section (pp. 55–60), "Reference Tools for Botany," by Joseph Ewan. The Missouri Botanical Garden plans to issue a facsimile reprint of this item as a keepsake of the XVI International Botanical Congress to be held at the Garden in St. Louis (August 1999). Through the enthusiastic support of Harry, Hafner Publishing Co. published and assisted in the production of "A Short History of Botany in the United States," edited by Joseph Ewan (1969). This book was distributed at the XI International Botanical Congress in Seattle, WA, August/September 1969.

Harry retired from Stechert Macmillan on 30 November 1973 and then briefly compiled catalogs for Jack N. Bartfield, an antiquarian bookseller of New York City. In December 1974 Harry founded his own business, Lubrecht & Cramer, Booksellers and Publishers, which was later incorporated (Au-

gust 1983). Joerg Cramer (deceased 4 June 1985), a German publisher, specialized in reprinting classical botanical books, many of which Hafner had distributed in the United States. Harry's wife Anne, and later his son Charles, assisted in the business, originally carried out from their country home in Forestburgh, NY, and dealing predominantly with new, scholarly books, mostly in botany and natural history. The company is also a distributor for Koeltz Scientific Books, Gustav Fischer Verlag, and J. Cramer. Although his bookselling company primarily was concerned with new titles, Harry continued his profound interests in rare books and the appraisal of libraries. Among the botanical collections that he appraised were those of Carroll W. Dodge, the New York Horticultural Society, Emanuel D. and Ann W. Rudolph, William C. Steere, and R. Gordon Wasson. The remarkable Rudolph Library of 53,000 volumes of botany and natural history books has since been donated to The Ohio State University Libraries (Stuessy et al. 1997).

For more than two decades Harry and Anne Lubrecht featured booksale tables at botanical and scientific meetings and regional mycological forays. Their service was known not only for the sale of books, typically sold at a special discount for meeting and foray attendees, but also for their congenial and knowledgeable conversations. Harry captivated customers with his storehouse of botanical and bibliographical knowledge. He and his wife regularly attended the annual meetings of the Council on Botanical and Horticultural Libraries, Inc., and national and international book fairs. Concerning the latter, he attended 49 annual exhibits of the Frankfurt Book Fair in Germany.

Harry was a modest and caring person, yet he forthrightly and candidly expressed his opinions. I remember him also for many reminiscences of his book trade career and the botanists with whom he associated. With a rich background of experience and strong sense of the book market, Harry successfully introduced the quality paperback, also known as the softbound, to the scholarly book trade. Among the first in his field, he adopted photo-offset printing as the process for producing reprints. Even when this was not widely practiced, Harry encouraged minority hiring and developed a staff fluent in numerous languages. He held membership in the American Antiquarian Booksellers' Association, American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS), Council on Botanical and Horticultural Libraries, Inc., International Association for Plant Taxonomy, Mycological Society of America, New York Botanical Garden, North American Mycological Association, and Old Book Table (NY). Harry became a U.S. citizen on 14 December 1936. As a member of the Lutheran Church, he was a deacon during the 1960s and early 1970s. Among his honors was a Special Service Award from the Mycological Society of America presented at the annual meeting of the AIBS, San Antonio, TX, August 1991.

Harry's successful life was shared with his wife Anne (Johanne Marie Ficke) whom he married on 2 October 1937. Harry is survived by his wife Anne; two sons, Peter Thomas Lubrecht, Sr., a retired teacher of Drama and English and presently Artistic Director of Brundage Park Playhouse, of Randolph, NJ, and Charles Frederick Lubrecht, co-manager of Lubrecht & Cramer, of Montgomery, NY; three grandsons: Peter T. Lubrecht, Jr., Christopher C. Lubrecht, and Bryan Leone. Harry's two sisters, Ilse and Ruth Lubrecht, predeceased him. Funeral services were held 15 November 1997 in St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Port Jervis and cremation took place at the H. G. Smith Crematory, Stroudsburg, PA. Interment of his ashes will take place at the Forestburgh Cemetery. As a tribute to Harry, a memorial program in celebration of his life will be held at The New York Botanical Garden in the fall 1998. Memorial contributions may be sent to The LuEsther T. Mertz Library, New York Botanical Garden, 200th Street and Southern Boulevard, Bronx, NY 10458.

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